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*** ANNUAL REPORT ***

OF THE

REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING.

National Association of Naval Veterans,

U. S. OF A.



PITTSBURGH, PA., September 10, 1894.

SHIPMATES:

In presenting this, my second annual report, I shall be brief as to the work accomplished during the year just ending, for the reason my General Orders which have been issued monthly during my term of office have been so full and detailed that your time need not be taken up here recounting the events. I must congratulate all hands upon the marked earnestness and zeal which has pervaded our body during the entire year. The tone of the Order has been largely increased and elevated, and to-day we are stronger and, more powerful for good than at any period in our history. Our recognition is more extended, our influence greater, and our *esprit du corps* better than many organizations of like character whose charters antedates ours by many years. Our numerical gains have been larger and our losses by death and other causes very small, and we have many reasons for congratulations that must be apparent to all observers.

Perfect harmony has prevailed throughout our entire jurisdiction, and no commanding officer has had a more loyal and devoted set of officers and crew than your speaker. While the work of your senior officer has been at times very taxing, he has been cheered on and comforted by the hearty endorsement of his subordinates, and to each and every Shipmate he tendered his profound gratitude for their support, confidence, and expressions of official and personal regards. The cares, anxieties and burdens of my official duties have at times been many and oftentimes great, but the kindly encouragement given so freely and heartily from all quarters has made my onerous duties a pleasure, and to-day they are thought of as but a passing dream.

When this Convention adjourned last year at Indianapolis the National Association was practically without any funds in its treasury, owing to the defalcation of the Fleet Paymaster whom we had elected at Detroit, and in whom every one placed the utmost reliance. Not a dollar was left, and the entire visible assets were not valued at twenty dollars, and he had also relegated to us a legacy of unpaid bills and tangled accounts which latter it has been so far impossible to straighten out, although every effort has been made to do so. Your present Fleet Paymaster, Shipmate E. F. Dustin, with great perseverance and skill has during the year past swept away all our indebtedness save one bill amounting to One Hundred and Twenty-nine Dollars, has promptly met every bill incurred during this administration, has paid for the publication of the New Ritual, a stock of blank Charters, a complete outfit of blank Commissions, etc., and has a stock of supplies on hand valued at over Three Hundred Dollars, all of which will be set forth in his annual report.

A more energetic, intelligent, painstaking, capable officer could not have been found as the Chief of this Department. I have known day by day of his official acts, every one of which has met my hearty approval and endorsement, and you will make no mistake if you elect him to another term, if he will accept it.

To my Secretary, George W. Bostwick, who has served us so faithfully and so conscientiously for several years past, I must return my most grateful thanks for the manner in which he has performed his arduous duties in season and out of season. His knowledge of the affairs of the National Association is perhaps greater than any of our shipmates, and the careful, prompt and intelligent manner which he attends to every detail merits our most sincere commendations.

Commodore Cyrus Sears, my Chief Executive Officer, has evinced that earnestness and zeal which merits my heartiest praise and he has been in close touch with me during my entire administration, and his counsel and advice have been always of the most valued character.

Fleet Chaplain Samuel Alman, our good friend and spiritual pilot has ever been by my side to counsel and advise, with that sincerity of heart and purpose which has endeared him to me beyond words to express. A shipmate of rare, excellent, executive ability, clear in every purpose, conscientious in all things, firm as a rock, yet with a heart like a woman, he has dispensed his teachings and goodly work broadcast to our great good and to our honor. He deserves well at your hands, in guiding our ship in its coming cruises.

To Captain R. N. Hopkins I am indebted for much valuable service rendered, and for his earnest work in the limited sphere of his duties. He has wrought faithfully and well. I am unable to state the amount of duty performed by our Commander or Lieut-Commander as I have not heard from them more than three or four times during the year.

Senior-Lieutenant B. D. Blanchard has been a constant and intelligent worker, being in close touch with me, and a very helpful, earnest member of my staff and worthy of all commendation. Lieutenant Jos. Chace, Jr., has been South for several months in search of health, and he has not had the opportunity to show his accustomed zeal in our work.

The duties of their offices have not demanded any special exertion on the part of our Fleet Surgeon C. Marion Dodson, nor our beloved shipmate, Fleet Engineer, John B. Wirt, to whom we owe so much for his labors in our behalf at Indianapolis last year. National Boatswain, W. E. Goodenough, has been a worker to whom I owe a hearty meed of thanks, prompt, energetic and laboring faithfully for our general good and welfare. Our National Historian, Past Commander William Simmons, that tireless, indefatigable shipmate, whose pen and voice is ever to the front for the Naval Veterans has my thanks for his services so generously and so ably rendered.

Last, but not least, I must mention with gratitude the faithful service rendered me by my Senior Aide and Chief of staff Will. E. Atkins, whose marked intelligence and earnestness for the best interest of the National Association are worthy of emulation by all who desire our progress and prosperity. For two terms shipmate Atkins has served me in this same capacity, and I have ever found him ready, willing and anxious to do his duty with a marked earnestness of purpose which has made his work very acceptable to me.

There are several of my aides who well deserve special mention for their splendid work during the year past; shipmates who have really well earned the honor conferred upon them, others have not been so marked in the line of duty evidently not being so placed that they could display or exhibit their talents, but who doubtless have done their share, but have been too modest to let their light so shine that it could be seen of men.

The Executive Committee as a body have not been called upon for any extra special duty in connection with their office for the reason that fortunately no grave questions have arisen calling for the action of that body, but from the character of the shipmates who have held this office I have always felt that did an emergency arise I had at my call a body of men who could be relied upon.

Late in my administration I felt it my duty to appoint an acting legal head of our Association, and therefore announced as Acting Judge-Advocate-General our eminent jurist Capt. Chas. Cowley, who served in that capacity in the South Atlantic Squadron during the war, and while it has not been necessary to call his valuable services into requisition, yet I deem it most important that the office of Judge-Advocate-General with the rank of Captain be created at this Convention, and my judgment and appointment be confirmed in this matter.

I desire to say, before closing under the head of Commendations to officers, that the year just ending is very marked, in this, that the earnestness, zeal and intelligence of the Commanding Officers and Secretaries of Local Associations has been of a much higher degree than ever known in our history as an organization. Reports from them have been more frequent and fuller than ever before; and the entire tone of the correspondence of a higher grade, showing a very commendable advancement in all that pertains to our power and influence for good. I may further state that the general tone and appearance of our entire command has been vastly improved, and if we but continue to do our duty we shall attain an excellence worthy of the highest praise from all who know us within our borders.

My General Orders, which have been full and frank in their recountals of events, our progress, and of suggestions which I deem of value and importance to the shipmates at large, have been so frequent that it relieves me of stating many details which might properly be set forth in an annual report, and hence I refrain from touching upon them at this time. I sin-

the whole body into a homogenous mass of unity, which means strength. He should be at his headquarters at all times so as to promptly reply to all correspondence, and should answer fully every communication addressed to him. I assert that one of the greatest claims I can make during my administration is the promptitude with which I have attended to the official correspondence addressed to Headquarters. I have written during the official year just closing nearly 4,000 letters, and sent out during my two administrations over 7,000 official orders and circulars. I have represented the National Association at meetings, encampments, and other functions more than one hundred times during my terms, and have never permitted a public ceremonial to occur that I could reach, when it was proper for the Naval Veteran to appear in uniform but I have been on deck with a representative staff. I do not mention these matters to boast of my individual work, but rather to show what is to be expected of the shipmate who shall have the honor to succeed me. The office of Rear Admiral with me has been no sinecure either in emoluments or work.

I crave no flattering eulogy at your hands, for my labors, but I ask you to select for my successor a shipmate who will endeavor as faithfully as I have to keep the interest of the Naval Veterans to the front during his administration, and to turn over to his successor an organization as strong, popular and powerful as I do to-day when I shall hand over the National gavel, to him who is to rule over you in the year to come. My heart is full to-day, my dear shipmates, in taking leave of you. It is a painful moment with me, I can assure you. With but few exceptions I stand here to-day one of the oldest members of the first Naval Veteran Associations of the United States, dating back to 1867 and the second one was organized in my office a few years later. For four years I have been among your trusted leaders and workers, and until the day of my death, I expect to be with you, to work with you and for you. Can you wonder that this is an anxious moment with me, not that I do not know there are shipmates within the sound of my voice who can and will fill my place, perhaps, far more satisfactorily than I have done, but I am like the old captain who turns his ship over to his trusted lieutenant. He cannot forget that he once commanded the ship himself. This is but human, so pardon me if I have, in my tenderness of heart, given way at this time to the emotions which fill my breast. We too often, in assemblages like these, select some "good fellow" because he is a good fellow, and like him, but learn when it is too late, that our "good fellow" is not of the material for a successful leader and commander. It is to guard against this too common error that to-day I raise my warning voice.

In concluding I desire to thank most heartily those of my staff who have so nobly stood by me. Some of them, however, have evidently had no time to keep in touch with headquarters, judging from the paucity of their correspondence. There is plenty for each national officer to do if he wishes to do it, and if the whole staff would each year do their whole duty great results might be accomplished.

I am of opinion that the selection of our officers should be made regardless of locality, but solely on the ground of fitness. They should be men who have commanded and led men, who by their knowledge of commanding can, and will, enforce respect, and thus more easily enforce discipline, for without discipline we soon, as an organization, would go to pieces. The same holds good in local organizations. It is an old adage that a "good captain makes a good crew," and I believe it to be a sound one in fact. Our future depends upon our commanding officers. No one would think of sending a ship to sea in command of an engineer and her motive power in charge of a commodore. Nor would we expect to have the sails properly furled or reefed by coal passers, or the furnaces properly fed with fuel by a corporal's guard of marines. It is all very well for us to say "we have now voluntarily cast aside the former distinction of rank and station," but we must not cast aside the fact that "some men are born to command" and it is from this class of shipmates we must select our commanding officers.

But I must not dilate on this subject any longer. I have done as I deem my duty in this matter, and pray God may direct us aright in all our future deliberations and doings in the few years that may be before us.

I now take my official farewell of you, thankful for your every kindness, for your consideration of all my weaknesses and shortcomings, for your cheerful support, and for all the kindly words spoken or written since I have been with you. To those who in the heat of the race for the highest goal in your gift, may have spoken words which doubtless they would gladly recall, words which at the time may have grated harshly on my ear, and sometimes left a sting in my heart. I freely forgive. God knows I wish you each and all His richest blessings on earth, and a joyful entrance into the blissful Port of Peace where all is joy and life eternal. God bless you.

Fraternally,

B. S. OSBON,
Rear Admiral Commanding.

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